

KNOWINDIA

# Classical Music



*Cover: Sitar maestro Ravi Shankar in concert. One of the greatest living exponents of Hindustani classical music, Ravi Shankar has also done much to create an international awareness and knowledge of the music of India.*



*Kishori Amonkar, a vocalist noted for her rendering of the khayal form in Hindustani classical music. She is accompanied by the essential instrument, the tanpura, which provides a constant sounding of the tonic.*



The cultivation, enjoyment and appreciation of music at all levels and in different spheres of life has always had a vitally important place in Indian culture. So much so that music was acclaimed as the one means of attaining the four-fold aim of the human life meaning: religio-ethical values, socio-economic values, emotional-aesthetic values and devotional-spiritual values, depending on the approach and attitude of the individual pursuer. The art and science of music was extolled as both *Lokaranjana* — leading to sensuous enjoyment

and aesthetic delight and *Bhavabhanjana* — leading to spiritual bliss and liberation.

The all-embracing pervasiveness of music in the traditional cultural life of India can be envisaged in three broadly demarcated areas, with interactions and mutual adaptations through the ages:

Folk, tribal and similar varieties pertaining to the different regions and sub-regions of the country; temple traditions connected with religious sects and cults, as also those existing outside these and traditions in the classical or art music — the





learned music governed by S'astric traditions, canons and regulations.

The ancient name for music in India was *Gabdhavam* which was recognised as an *Upa-Veda* or a subsidiary of the *Sama-Veda*. The origin of Indian music thus goes back to the Vedic times and the Vedic lore. In ancient Indian literary and religious works like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, *Puranas* like the *Vishnu-dharmottara*, the *Markandeya*, the *Kavyas* and the *Katha Sahitya* the art of music has been invariably referred to as *Gandharvam*, *Gandharva-Veda* or *Gandharva-vidya*.

Covering both the vocal and the instrumental modes of musical expression, this *Gandharvam* comprised of (i) *Svara* i.e. tone, melody, (ii) *Tala* i.e. tempo, rhythm and time-cycle, and (iii) *Pada* i.e. verbal text. Bharat Muni's *Natya Sastra* (circa 2 BC



1. In concert: sitarist Imrat Khan shares a complete rapport with his tabla-playing accompanist.
2. The tabla player creates rich and complex rhythmic variations on the theme.
3. Vasant Rao Deshpande, a well-known Hindustani music vocalist.





and 3 AD) is the first extant work wherein *Gandharvām* as a codified system of music with its elaborate complex of *sruti* (microtone) – *svara* (musical tone) – *grama* (scale) – *murchhana* (mode) – *jati* (classified tunes) has been expounded. With this systematised matrix as the basic point of reference, India's music moved along the path of evolution through a two-pronged process of conformity and creativity. In course of time, the term *Sangeetam* denoting the amalgam of vocal and instrumental music plus dance came into currency.

From the tonal pattern of *jati* was taking shape a more abstract, comprehensive and imaginative mode of musical expression which appropriately came to be called *raga*. With the emergence of *raga* as a melodic theme endowed with tonal-acoustic and creative-emotive potentials, Indian music

reached a point of permanent vantage investing it with a unique beauty and grandeur, a vitality and an expressive abandon, with potential for spiritual elevation. Indeed, the concept of *raga* elevated Indian music to the exalted status of an autonomous realm of pure sound governed by its own canons and exigencies.

Along with the *raga*, the *tala* or the temporal component is also a unique, unparalleled feature of Indian music. The concept of *tala* as a time cycle with its varied shapes, sizes and ethos, a kinetic dwelling as it were, for the melody and its architectonics to grow upon, is as creative a phenomenon as it is astounding. With the device of specified vocables, their combinations and sequences, pulls and tensions, the Indian *tala* lore assume the discipline of a rhythmic syntactic language.

*Prabandha* in musical parlance



denotes a well-knit, closely-bound structure with the tonal-rhythmic-verbal elements combined in an organically appropriate manner. The word *bandish* prevalent in Hindustani music to-day is synonymous with the idea of *prabandha*.

Broadly, by the seventh century AD the triad of *raga-tala-prabandha* had become the quintessence of the Indian musical tradition. This triad has, all along, provided a firm, solid bedrock for the grand, vibrating edifice of Indian classical music which holds good even today.

This does not, however, mean that Indian music is a static phenomenon and that the Sastric discipline has been dead-weight preventing any further movement or modification. On the contrary, as a creative art, Indian music could not but be dynamic and changing. Within the basic framework, modifications, deletions, divisions and adjustments have been taking place through the centuries.

Among the revolutionising changes occurring from time to time in the realm of Indian music, its bifurcation into two systems after the thirteenth century was a major one. Flowing from the common ancient heritage and maintaining the essentially melodic character and of course the invincible *raga-tala-prabandha* triad, the two streams — the northern (including the western and the eastern regions of the country) system called Hindustani music and the southern system

called Carnatic music, went on developing on their own lines.

The bifurcation became an established feature of Indian music and today, Indian music is well-known all over the world as comprising two well-demarcated systems — the Hindustani and the Carnatic. Two species under one genus; two distinctive entities under one banner. What are the common, unifying characteristics revealing the Indian identity and where do the distinctive, differentiating grounds lie?

In spite of many major and minor differences in the content and delineation as well as in the structure, styles and ornamental techniques, there is a marked fundamental unity between the two systems. As Indian music, both have a common origin, a common course of initial development, a common perspective. Both the systems are essentially modal and melodic in character with a successive tonal progression, a twelve tone gamut with specified intervals and a tonic or drone as a supporting ground and a constant point of reference. The triad of *raga-tala-prabandha* is the common matrix for both. Vast scope for creative unfolding and elaborating of the abstract *raga* theme (independent of any pre-structured composition) in the shape of *alap* is an important facet of musical expression for both the systems. In fact, both the systems have their roots in the ancient system of Hindustani music originating from and nurtured in India's philosophical and cultural





1. Exponents of Hindustani and Carnatic music come together on the concert platform in a rare occasion: Amjad Ali Khan on the sarod and Lalgudi Jayaraman on the violin.

2. Violinist N. Rajan. The violin is the lone bowed accompanying and solo instrument in the Carnatic system.

traditions.

Some salient features distinguishing the two musical systems are:

(i) The approach to *raga* and its structure and unfoldment. Because of the more scale-based structure of *ragas* in Carnatic music as against the phrasing and gravitated clustering structure of the Hindustani *ragas*, the potential for their adaptation in the Hindustani idiom is much greater. Carnatic *ragas* like *Kirvani*, *Hamsadhawani*, *Abhogi*, *Charukeshi*, *Vasantamukhari* and others have entered the Hindustani domain through inspired creative musicians. The Hindustani practice of combining *ragas* in the shape of *Mis'ra ragas* like *Vasant-Bahar*, *Jayant-Nata*, *Kaphi-Kanhra* is virtually absent in Carnatic music. However, rendering of an



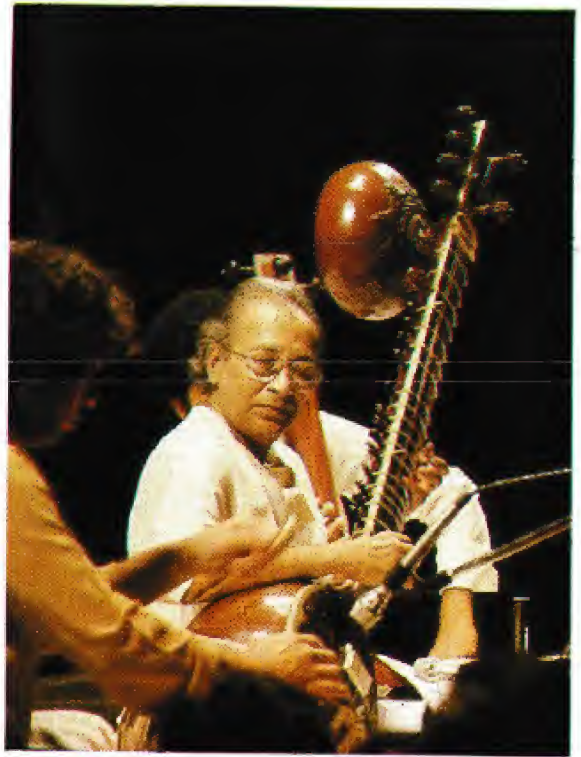
invocative verse usually in Sanskrit in a series of *ragas* called *Raga-Malika* is prevalent.

(ii) The structure and treatment of rhythm and *tala*. For instance, there is a more precise and mathematical concept of rhythm in the south while a flowing movement is the grain of Hindustani music. In Hindustani music each *tala* has a specified pattern of vocables (*bol*s in the *tala* parlance) called *theke* which is the base for further elaboration.

(iii) Tonal accent and the utterance, complexions and nuances of notes and their phrasing and combining, involving the use of ornamentations like glides, sweeps, graces, curves, coilings, steady sustained tones and so on. The handling and treatment of sound is the veritable inner sense of musical expressiveness which endows the music with an individuality, charm, and an emotive flavour of its own. Marked differences in this area between the two systems make them distinctly apart.

(iv) Structure and treatment of compositional forms. While a sectioned structure like *Sthayi-Antara* in Hindustani and *Pallavi, Anupallavi* and *Charanam* in the Carnatic system is common to both, there is much difference in their nomenclature, number, layout and treatment.

(v) The verbal contents of Carnatic classical compositions with perhaps the one exception of *javal*i, are invariably devotional, didactic or spiritual in character whereas in the Hindustani lore,



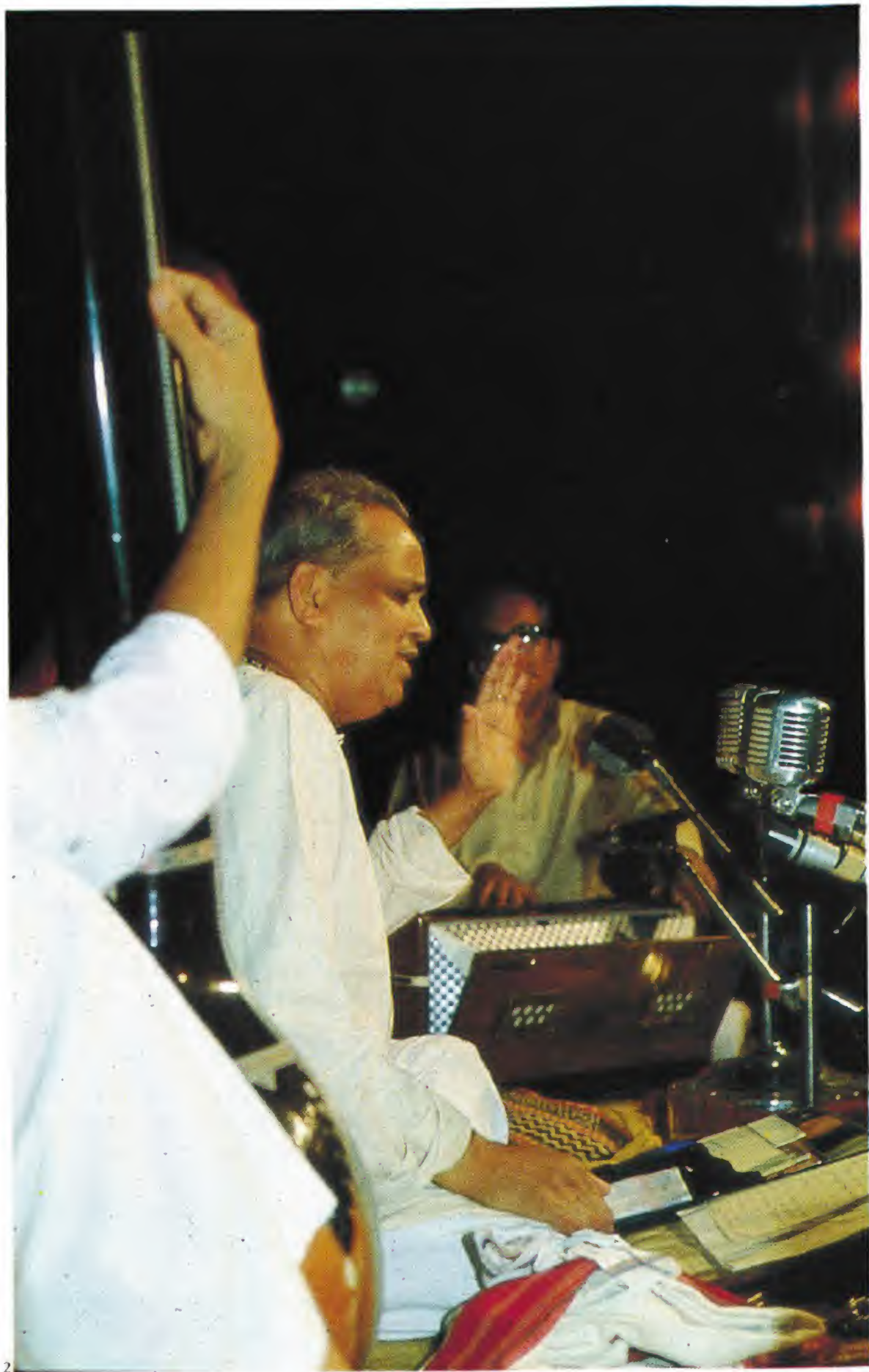
1. In concert: Nikhil Banerjee on the sitar. 2. Kumar Gandharva, one of Hindustani music's greatest vocalists, and an exponent of the *khayal* form.

there is a wide variety of themes ranging from the mundane-sensuous to the sublime-spiritual. The major languages suited to become a vehicle for music are Telugu for Carnatic, and Brajabhasha for Hindustani music.

(v) In Hindustani music the time theory or the diurnal sequence traditionally prescribed for *ragas* (like the *malhar* group for the rainy season and *vasanta* and *bahar* for the spring) as a respected convention and is adhered to although with some relaxations and adjustments to suit the needs of the times.

After the bifurcation of Indian music into two systems, music in









*Girija Devi: an exponent of the light classical form of Hindustani music.*

the north went on developing on its own lines. In spite of the fact that music as a means of entertainment was, in theory, forbidden in Islam, because of the irresistible charm and the delighting, elevating nature of the melodious art, the Muslim monarchs, especially the Mughals with their courtiers and noblemen, patronised musicians and promoted the art of music. At the courts of the Hindu kings too, music continued to flourish.

During this creative phase of its onward journey, Hindustani music developed on the matrix of its rich Indian heritage through an interaction with Persian-Arabic influences and intermingling of ideas and techniques. In fact, it was during the medieval centuries that the major forms prevailing in the present day Hindustani music like *dhrupada-dhamar*, *khayal-tarana*, *thumri-tappa* were evolved and acquired their distinctive

characteristics. It is noteworthy that the theoretical and historical side of music too was not neglected during this period. It was natural that the rulers being Muslims and their court language being Persian, knowledge of Sanskrit was negligible. For the benefit of the cultured, enlightened sections of society, with a discerning interest in the art and science of music, scholarly works were written in the Persian language during this period.

And yet, a gulf had started widening between the theory (*sastra*) and practice (*kala*). This was perhaps mainly because the performing professional musicians who virtually controlled the practice of music had little interest in the theoretical background of their art. Their approach lacked the scientific and catholic spirit so desirable for a classical art. As a result, by the 19th century, the various stylistic



schools or *gharanas* became applicated by separatist tendencies. Each *gharana* in its blind anxiety to extol its own distinctive style and tradition, developed a kind of arrogance towards all music which differed from their's in any respect or in any manner. The musical heritage of each *gharana* became a jealously guarded secret to be divulged only to the near kith and kin to the exclusion of any outsider.

Thus, the rich lore of the Hindustani musical art in terms of *raga* structures and their treatment, the treasure of compositions valued as an embodiment of *raga* forms and as an infrastructure for creative elaboration, handed down for generations through oral traditions had become scattered in small circuits among the families of professional musicians.

On the other side, because of the exclusive and voluptuous princely precincts where music flourished, it had lost contact with the common cultured sections of society. Although there did exist some eminent performing musicians, the social status and prestige of the musician and music itself had struck a veritable low. To foster love for music, to pursue the art was considered an undesirable activity, not respectable for the intelligensia. This, broadly, was the musical scene towards the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

However, as if in response to the crying need of the hour, there came, in the later part of the nineteenth century an upsurge of an all-round awakening in the country; an awareness of India's multi-dimensional national heritage was growing; not only in



*Sitar maestro Ravi Shankar in concert.*



the political and social fields, but also in the scientific, spiritual and cultural spheres including music, towering personalities started appearing.

A favourable feature in respect of Hindustani music was that as a result of diminishing princely patronage, prominent musicians had started moving out to big cities like Bombay and Calcutta in search of public patronage. For a wider circulation and for establishing a direct contact with the cultured sections of society amongst whom a keen interest in classical music was growing, this proved to be a blessing.

It was Pandit Bhatkande and Pandit Vishnu Digamber, the two great revivalists, who, with their extraordinary vision and determination retrieved the art and science of Hindustani music from its fallen position and restored to it the honour and high prestige which it once enjoyed.

As stated earlier, the triad of *raga-tala-prabandha* is the quintessence of the Hindustani musical tradition. A precious legacy from the past, this triad provides a firm, solid matrix for learning and supporting the vibrant, creative edifice of the structure and expressiveness of Hindustani music. *Raga*, a melodic theme regulated by rules and techniques is the pivotal value; and unfoldment of the *raga* form with its structural and aesthetic potentialities reinforced by *prabandha* or a pre-structured closed composition as a concretised embodiment of the

abstract *raga* form its supreme import.

What is *raga*? The time-honoured definition covering both the structural as well as the aesthetical aspects embodied in the concept of *raga* is fully valid even today. The definition runs — 'That specified arrangement of musical sounds which is adorned by notes and their movements and has the quality of enchanting the mind is called *raga*'.

The gamut or the entire range of musical tones (*svaras*) consists of seven basic (*suddha*) notes with their abridged solfa nomenclature running into *sa, ri (re), ga, ma, pa, dha, ni*; plus a modification (*vikrit*) each of *ri (re), ga, ma, dha, ni*; bringing the total to twelve. This twelve tone complex is the substance out of which scales and tunes giving rise to the various *ragas* are formed.

*Raga* is a melodic scheme governed by certain basic tenets, regulations and conventions; the claim or otherwise of a group of notes to *raga*-hood is to be determined with reference to these. Within the accepted frame-work, however, there is adequate scope for individual creative expression and improvisation.

The *raga* manifestation works out in two facets — the *anibaddha* (unstructured or not bound), and the *nibaddha* (structured or bound). The *anibaddha* signifies a free open manner of *raga* elaboration called *alap*. As against this, the *nibaddha* is bound by structural divisions — S'astric name *dhatus*, colloquially called *taks* —



1. Parveen Sultana, an exponent of the graceful, light-classical ghazal, which is essentially a song-poem.

2. Buddhaditya

Mukherjee, one of the younger generation of

sitarists. 3. Vocalist

Manik Verma in concert.

4. Sitarist Vilayat

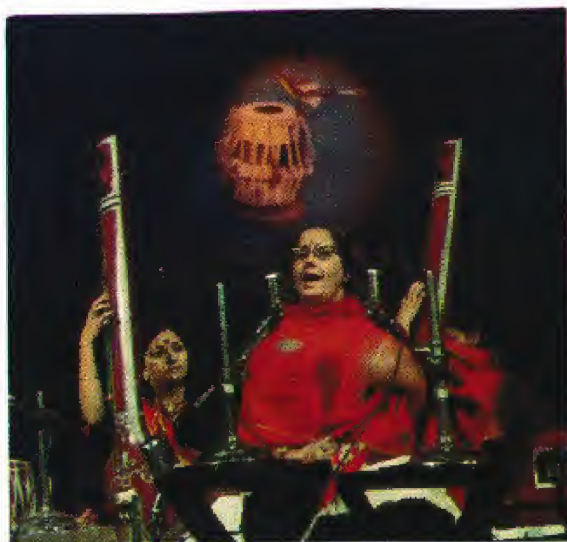
Khan, one of the great masters of Hindustani instrumental music.



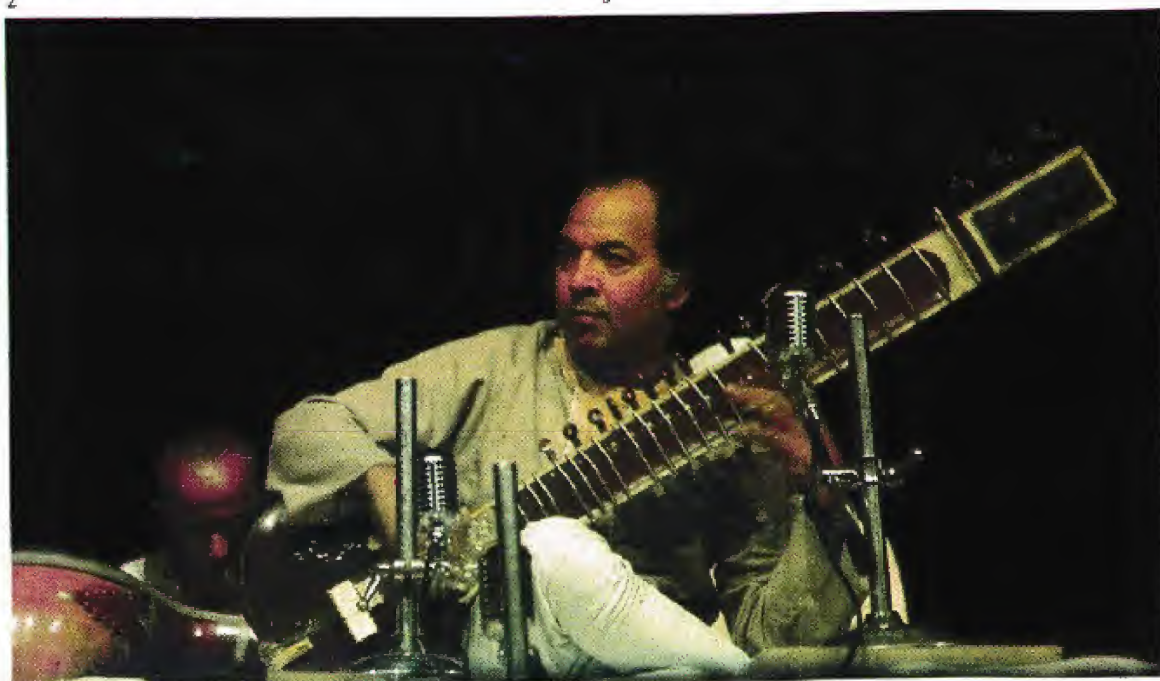
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and content constituents like the verbal text of a song called *angas*. This age-long format is substantially present in Hindustani music today.

In the mid-medieval period sprang up an iconographical idea organising the melodies into *ragas* (male) and *raginis* (female) with a family relationship. Six major *ragas* with six *raginis* as consorts for each *raga* and a number of *putra-ragas* (sons) with their wives was the structure of the system. Versified romantic descriptions of their visual representations gave rise to schools of lovely miniature painting. In all probability, the idea emanated from the dominant mood of the various melodies like the virile, heroic, grand of the masculine and the tender, soft, delicate, graceful of the feminine character, and moods like serene, lively, melancholy, radiant.

Some of the important ways of classifying *ragas* handed down through S'astric traditions and comprehensive and relevant to the *raga* lore today are:-

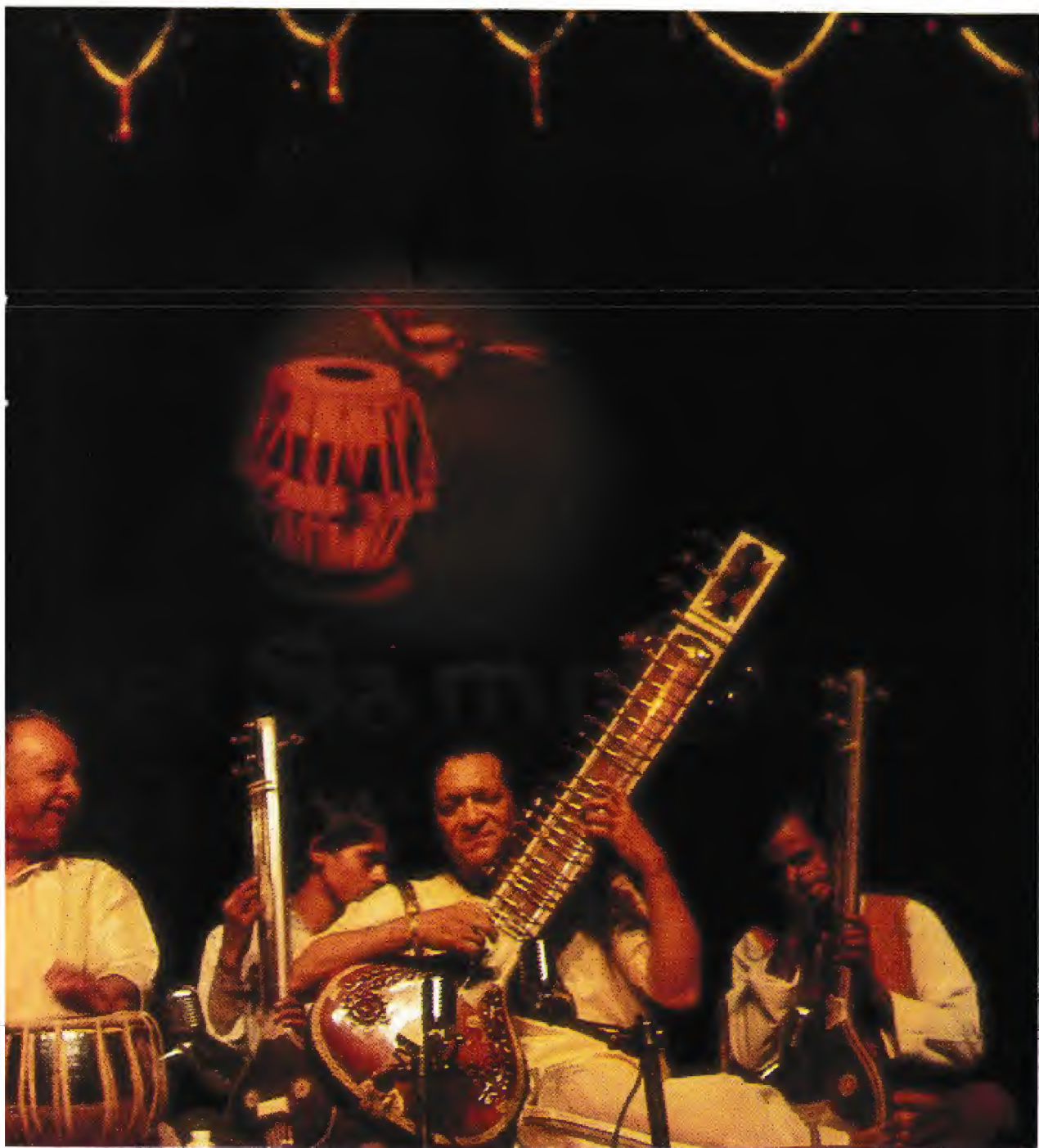
- i) The *raga-jati* classification based on the number of notes employed in a *raga*. For instance, *ragas Bhupali* and *Malkauns* with totally different notes, because of their five-note compass, are classified under one category called *auduva*, meaning pentatonic.
- ii) The *mela-raga* classification meaning a parent-mode and its derived *ragas*. Herein, *ragas* are classified on the basis of the type of notes i.e. natural (*s'uddha*), flat (*komal*) and sharp (*tivra*) employed



by them. For instance, under the parent scale of *Bhairava* having *ri* and *dha* flat are placed *ragas* like *Bhairava*, *Kalingda*, *Jogia*, *Bibhasa*, each with its own, distinctive phrases, manner of utterance, number of notes and their movements; *komal ri* and *komal dha* being the basis of their affinity with the *Bhairava* scale.

- iii) The *raga-anga* classification





indicating grouping of *ragas* on the basis of characteristic, identifying note-combinations called *raga-anga*. These essential, well-marked note-combinations or phrases when present in several *ragas*, become the base for their grouping together. It is essentially the *anga* which sets a tone for the idiom and delineation of *raga* and brings out its inner nature and ethos.

*Ravi Shankar and Alla Rakha: two great artistes meet to give a brilliant, virtuoso performance.*





The classical complex of Hindustani music comprises both vocal and instrumental. According to Indian musical convention, while vocal music occupies a place of primary importance, there has been a rich variety of musical instruments — both melodic and percussive. With distinctive qualities, techniques and points of excellence peculiar to each, their great importance is realised. However, for the authenticity of their musical contents repertory and *raga* delineation they have to look up to vocal traditions.

The compositional forms in Hindustani vocal music are — group I (a) the *dhrupada-dhamar* complex and (b) the *khayal-tarana* complex. This group has an implicit commitment to the *raga* form. This is the classical complex.

The other segment of Hindustani music, lighter, more emotive and lyrical in complexion



is denoted by terms like light-classical or demi-classical. It is comprised of *thumri-dadra* and other allied varieties like *chaiti*, *kajri*, *savan*, *jhoola*, mainly lifted from the folk musical lore, and *tappa*. The *ghazal* too when it combines in a traditional manner the beauty and delicacy of the text with congenial musical settings based on suitable *ragas* and chosen rhythmic patterns, is sometimes considered eligible for inclusion in the light-classical group. In this lighter complex there is a lyric-romantic temperament and the tonal-verbal phrasing is characterised by an emotive communicativeness and abandon and an element of freedom, some lines mixing the idiom with the classical, imaginatively straying away and coming back, generating a delightful feeling of surprise. While it is certainly governed by a tradition and technique of its own





in its structure and presentation, a disciplined commitment of the *raga* form is not expected in this lighter complex. The *tappa* group is also by and large restricted to those with an ethos suited to such predominantly emotive expressiveness. Some such *raga* names are, *Kaphi*, *Khamaj*, *Bhairavi*, *Peelu*, *Ghara*, *Jogia*, *Pahadi*, *Nand*.

*Sringara* or the erotic, is the dominating sentiment and theme of the *thumri* group. A wide range from the lower sensuous level of the human lover and the beloved to the divine twosome of Krishna and Radha, with his flute symbolising the yearning of the individual soul to unite with the universal soul, is covered.

*Thumri* is of two varieties: *bol-bant* and *bol-banao*. The former has considerable similarity with the medium-faster tempo *khayal* in its verbal and musical structure. It is



*Hindustani music vocalist Siddeshwari Devi in concert. She was an exponent of light-classical forms, emotive and lyrical in complexion.*



full of a brisk liveliness and playful rhythmic variations. In the *Kathak* dance-form, as a supporting song accompanying the expressive gestures, this variety of *thumri* plays a significant role. However, it is the *bol-banao* variety which embodies the essence of lyricism and delicacy of feeling. With its slow-moving, relaxed temper, it has the potential for giving expression to the subtle nuances of varying emotional states, all symbolising the beauty and delicacy of the 'erotic' residing in the human heart.

With its brisk zigzag movement and somewhat exotic, difficult note-clusters, the *tappa* is an engaging, crisp and bright form. A member of the light-classical group, the *tappa* is marked by a sense of wonder and excitement so distinct from the emotive tenderness of the *thumri*.

Among the stringed instruments, rudra vina, sitar, sarod and vichitra vina of the plucked group and sarangi dilruba and israj from the bowed category are prominent with varying degrees of popularity. Santur, an instrument with a long





tradition, endowed with a sparkling sweet tonal quality but with only a limited potential for the classical idiom, has come in an impressive way to the concert platform.

Imported from the European system and firmly installed in the Carnatic system, the violin is the lone bowed instrument in the Carnatic idiom for accompanying the voice as well as for solo playing.

Shehnai and flute are the wind instruments of Hindustani music. Associated by tradition with an

- 1. Shiv Kumar on the santur, an instrument known for its sparkling tonal quality.*
- 2. Hari Prasad Chaurasia, one of Hindustani music's greatest flautists.*
- 3. Ram Narain on the sarangi; this traditionally accepted accompanying instrument has an optimum affinity with the human voice and has also come to the fore as a solo instrument.*







auspicious ethos, shehnai has an emotive charm of its own.

Harmonium, 'the fascinating devil' with its merits of convenience, and usefulness in adding colour to a performance, is casting a spell over the domain of Hindustani music. Notwithstanding its shortcomings such as its total inability to bring out the subtle shades and graces characterising the various *ragas* as also the continuous, flowing movement of sound which is the very essence of Indian music, it is gaining more and more ground. Its major sphere is that of providing accompaniment to singing.

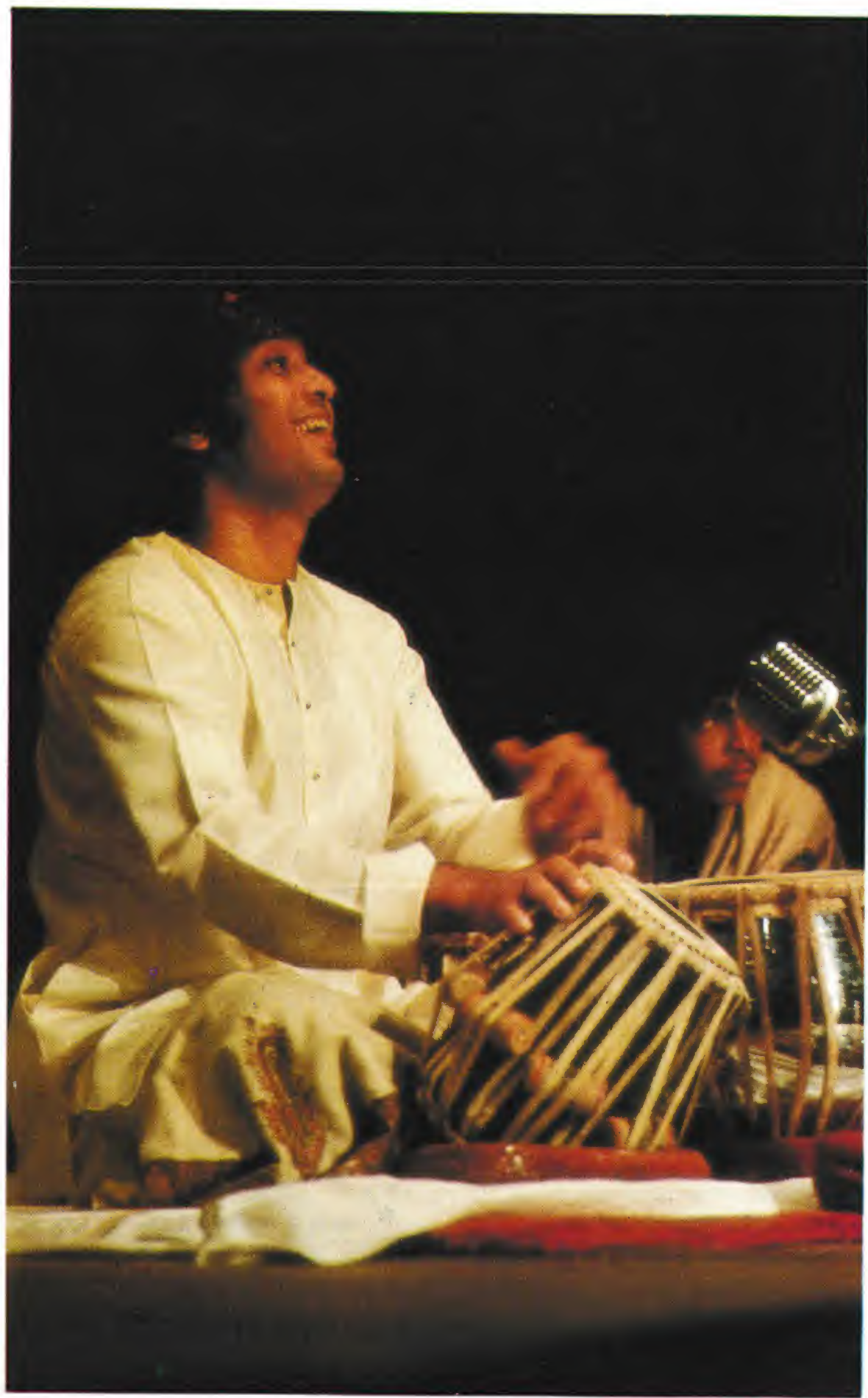
Sarangi, the traditionally accepted accompanying instrument has a sonorous pleasing quality, an optimum affinity with the human voice and is also competent to produce the graces and techniques of the classical idiom. It has come to the fore as a solo instrument.

*The tabla is the most popular percussion instrument in all forms of Hindustani music. It is a double drum made of two wooden bowls covered with skin, each being played with one hand.*

Tanpura, the ever-present drone providing a sonorous ground of reference, a sounding canvas to hold and support the extensive realm of Indian musical expression, is an indispensable instrument.

The grand old pakhawaj (mridanga) for *dhrupad* and rudra-vina and the graceful tabla-bayan pair for all the remaining forms, are the accompanying percussion instruments covering the entire range of Hindustani music — classical and light classical, vocal and instrumental. In providing accompaniment, the role of the percussionist is of a secondary, supporting nature, requiring a spirit of cooperation and an ability for imaginative, alert adjustments with







the main performer. However, there is a rich solo complement too to the art of pakhawaj and tabla. In a solo recital, the percussionist is his own master and can go his own way exhibiting his mastery over the varied lore of the percussion idioms.

Of the two major classical forms, *dhrupad* and *khayal*, *dhrupad* represents the older and highly respected tradition. Inclusive of *dhamar* and *sadra*, the *dhrupad* form is characterised by a great discipline, grandeur, pristine purity and an overall balance. Its roots in the ancient *prabandha*, the idea of *dhrupad* acquired a crystalised structure and content, with an identity of its own, towards the end of the fifteenth century.

Over a period of time however, due to elements like an increasingly mechanical adherence to the outer form, an excessive emphasis on rhythm to the detriment of melody, a decline set in. In the meanwhile, based on *dhrupad* itself, but with a somewhat loosened structural frame, making room for livelier and more beautifying embellishments, *khayal* was devised. This new form, while retaining the dignity of *dhrupad*, had more attractive features along with greater potential for individual creativity in the elaboration of the composition. Thus, the classic-romantic *khayal* overshadowed the classic *dhrupad*.

While the word *dhrupad* indicates only a closed composition, the *dhrupad* way of *raga* exposition is

comprised of two distinct segments, the *alap* prelude and the actual *dhrupad* composition. The first segment of *raga-alap* consists of a free elaboration of the tonal theme of the *raga*, exploring its structural and aesthetic potential. The *alap* development is without *tala* and follows the process of a gradual unfoldment, gradual in two ways: melodic as well as rhythmic. In the beginning it is the lower and the lower middle register where the *alap* moves; gradually it moves higher and higher, covering the full tonal range of the *raga*. This movement has to be in a slow, leisurely tempo without a pulsative rhythm. Throughout the entire *alap* elaboration, at the conclusion of an elaborated musical idea, the tonic is reached with a small refrain of *tana tom* or *ra na nom* emphasised by a stroke of the drum. The next stage moves in the medium tempo, introduced here in a pulsative rhythm forming into small clusters of notes acquiring attractive shapes through the grouping of a markedly rhythmic gait. The third stage with further acceleration of the tempo merges into the final stage, creating a variety of rhythmic patterns culminating in an exuberance of sound. Finally, with a concluding sweep, the *raga alap* comes to a close.

After the *alap* prelude, commences the rendering of a *tala* bound *bandish* of *dhrupad*/*dhamar*/*sadra*. At this stage the percussionist comes in. The performance enters a more tangible





1. The greatest living exponent of the shehnai, Bismillah Khan, in concert. This oboe-like wind instrument can produce the most intricate graces and glissandos. 2. Ram Chatur Malik, a renowned exponent of the dhrupad form of Hindustani vocal music.

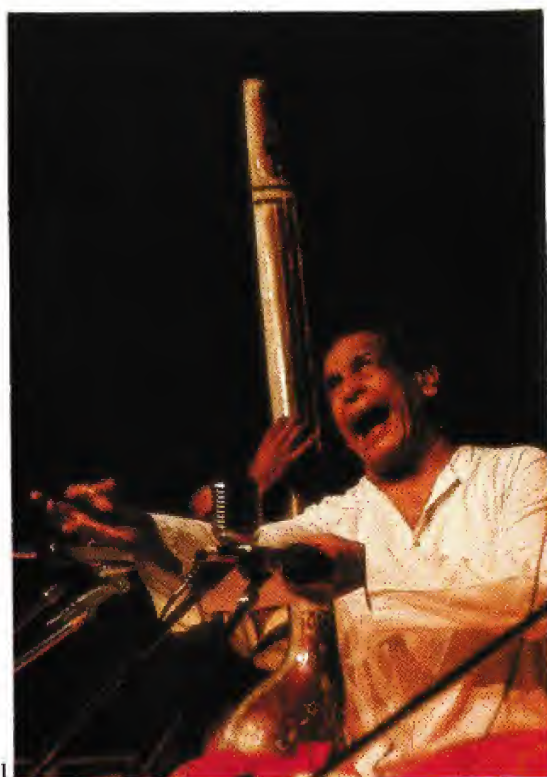


1, 2 & 3. *Bhimsen Joshi in concert. He is known particularly for his masterly rendering of the imaginative and thoughtful khayal form.* 4. *Sarod maestro Ali Akbar Khan in concert.*

and exciting phase. With an understanding of a spirit of co-operation between the singer and the drummer a *dhrupad* recital can mean a uniquely delighting, elevating experience.

A full fledged *dhrupad/dhamar/sadra* composition comprises four movements or structural divisions: *sthayi, antara, sanchari, abhoga*. With occasional exceptions, a composition usually has four lines or *tala* cycles (*avartanas*) to each of the four divisions. The *sthayi antara* twin is today the structural compass for the entire complex of Hindustani music.

In Hindustani music today, *khayal* is the principal vocal form enjoying wide popularity and currency. Its two varieties, the *vilambita* or slow and the *madhya cum druta* meaning the medium cum fast tempo, are based on the temporal aspect. However, this involves very much more than merely a slower or a faster tempo. While the identity of the *raga* in which a slow and a fast composition



are both cast, is an important feature common to both, the two have a distinctive character, movement and ethos of their own. Indicative of the more expansive character of the slow *khayal*, it is qualified as *bada* meaning big whereas the faster one is called *chhota* meaning small.

An Arabic-Persian word, *khayal* has interesting connotative complexions: dream, vision, imagination, meditation, reflection, apparition and impression. In Hindustani music, *khayal* can be described as an imaginative and thoughtful form of musical expression which is full of feeling and fancy.

For a truly comprehensive exposition of *raga*, bringing out the varied complexions and stances, serene and leisurely, bright and lively, melodic and rhythmic, while





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at the same time maintaining its basic temper, the *vilambita druta* alliance of *khayal* has proved a most effective medium. It is this pre-established pattern of *khayal* presentation which is in vogue today. For the rhythmic

accompaniment, tabla is the prescribed instrument for the *khayal* group.

Under the canopy of broadly accepted raga structures and broad norms cum guide-lines governing the *khayal* form, there grew a body



of musical knowledge and models treasured by all. In the process of evolution, devices like a graduated expansion of the *raga* theme, interweaving of the verbal phrases with tonal clusters, in medium and faster movements, profuse use of ornamentation and graces got incorporated in the *khayal* delineation. Tabla with its sophisticated rhythmic art provided another enlivening component. Thus, a powerful new avenue for improvisation and individual creativity was opened up.

Linked up with *khayal*, *tarana* is a song form with a chequered historical background. In its current shape, it is a *bandish* set to *raga* and *tala* with a verbal content consisting of non-romantic syllables. The main distinguishing feature of *tarana* is these meaningless syllables which play a vitally important role of imparting a unique shape to the *bandish* and of providing a matrix for improvisation of sparkling, exciting rhythmic variations with syncopative exchanges between the singer and the drummer.

With growing knowledge and appreciation of music as a result of wide-spread musical education and its dissemination through media like radio, the gramophone, conferences, festivals and concerts, the competent among the *gharana* musicians are in greater demand as concert artistes and as *gurus* for talented persons aspiring to become performing musicians.

At the international level too,



G.S. Sachdev playing the flute.

Hindustani music has effectively projected itself and earned a place of honour, both in the fields of performance-practice as well as in scholarly studies and research. Its slow, contemplative beginnings flowing into livelier streams, its two-pronged process of conformity-cum-creativity, and its scope for improvisation and individual expression are some of the features which make for its special appeal.

From the point of view of India's classical music, the twentieth century stands out as the most historic and proliferative period. Indeed, the past eight decades have been a period of resurgence, of progress, of social and cultural change; an age of an overall musical explosion.



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